

The Library of the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine and its Oriental Collections with a Note on the Malay Collection of Manuscripts

by
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It was a great pleasure to be invited to speak to the staff of the library of the University of Malaya on the 24th September last about the Wellcome Institute and its Library, especially since the Wellcome Institute is not well-known beyond the limited bounds of medical history. I was therefore delighted by the invitation of Mrs. Khoo to contribute my talk to this journal.

The Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine had its beginnings at the end of the last century when the American-born pharmacist, Sir Henry Wellcome came to Britain in 1880 and formed a partnership with another American pharmacist, Silas Burroughs, so forming the world famous pharmaceutical company, Burroughs Wellcome, of today. Fifteen years later in 1895, Burroughs died leaving Wellcome to carry on the company and develop it into an international pharmaceutical firm with offices in many parts of the world including Kuala Lumpur.

After the turn of the century, Wellcome gradually freed himself as much as possible from the routine of personally conducting his business and turned his mind to his interest in the history of pharmacy and the whole history of medicine in general. Asso-

ciated with Wellcome's desire to collect objects illustrating the history of medicine was his keenness to build up a collection of books which would serve as a basis for the study of these subjects.

Gradually the idea of a museum and book collection devoted entirely to the history of medicine and its allied sciences evolved. In this way, the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum came into being. Wellcome did not intend to make his historical collection publicly available until he considered it had reached a satisfactory standard, but when preparations were being made for the 17th International Congress of Medicine to be held in London in 1913, he was asked by certain leaders of the medical profession to show some of his collection. Wellcome agreed, and the exhibition which he held was a tremendous success. After the conclusion of the Congress, Wellcome was requested to make some part of his collection available to a wider public, and so it was that the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum was opened in Wigmore Street and 23 years later in 1936, transferred to its present building in Euston Road which had been specially built to house it and is now also occupied by the head office of Burroughs Wellcome whose premises were destroyed during the war.¹

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¹ See F.N.L. Poynter, "The Wellcome Historical Medical Museum and Library and its services to research in the History of Medicine", *Verhandlungen des XX Internationalen Kongresses für der Medizin, Berlin, 22-27 August 1966*, Hildesheim, 1968, pp. 411-18.

Wellcome died in 1936 and under the terms of his will the Wellcome Foundation Ltd. became a unique institution. All shares in the Foundation are vested in Trustees who receive the profits declared as dividends. These are utilised for the advancement of research in medicine and related sciences. The terms of the will also provided for the establishment of research museums and libraries concerned with the collection of information connected with the history of medicine and its allied sciences. The Wellcome Trust is now the largest charity in the United Kingdom supporting medical and veterinary research including medical history throughout the world to the tune of c.12 million pounds sterling per annum. The Library was formally opened to the public in December 1949, although its basic organisation was not completed until 1962. In 1960, the Trustees formally took possession of the collection from the Wellcome Foundation Ltd., and until 1964 the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum and the Wellcome Historical Medical Library existed side by side in the Wellcome Building. In 1976 the Trustees decided to give the museum on permanent loan to the nation and following this the first of two galleries known as the Wellcome Museum of the History of Medicine was opened at the Science Museum in December 1980, and a further gallery has since been opened.

The Library remains to form the centre of the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine. It is by no means a closed collection, but actively acquires material relating to the work of the Institute as an international postgraduate centre for research in medical history working in close association with the Department of History of Medicine at University College London. At the present time the Library is acquiring about 2,000 books a year and subscribes to 220 periodicals.

The Library contains about 400,000 printed books, 60,000 of these published before 1850, and several hundred incunabula. One of Wellcome's aims was to acquire a copy of every significant printed text of the history of western medical science and in this he was almost completely successful.² In addition to half a million or so printed books, the Wellcome Institute has received substantial loan deposits in recent years from other libraries including 45% of the original library of the Medical Society of London and some 24,000 18th and 19th century books belonging to the

Royal Society of Medicine. The collection of western manuscripts comprises some 5,000 items from the 10th to 19th centuries. In addition, the Institute possesses a fine collection of 100,000 autograph letters including substantial collections of the original letters of Florence Nightingale, Louis Pasteur, Joseph Lister and other figures prominent in medical history.

In 1979 the Wellcome Institute established a Contemporary Medical Archives Centre to encourage and help with the preservation of 20th century records, documents and archive collections relating to medical care and research in Britain. The archives so far collected reflect all aspects of modern medicine from laboratory research, clinical practice and public health to unorthodox and fringe medicine, and so the original sources of future medical history will be available in the Wellcome Institute for scholars of the 21st century.

The iconographic collections comprise over 100,000 drawings, prints and paintings along with exceedingly important photographic collections. The subject matter is wide-ranging and includes besides the practice of medicine, such ancillary arts as alchemy and chemistry, anatomy, microbiology and pharmacy.

Before moving on to the collections of oriental manuscripts and books brief mention might be made to the American collection. This collection covers the full range of medical practice in North, Central and South America, and the Caribbean from the medicine of the American Indian to the Europeanised medicine of the colonial and immediate post-colonial periods. The collection comprises some 600 books and manuscripts, and a catalogue has recently been published.³

All the collections found in the Library represent a vertical cross section of the history of civilization and even mankind. This is especially evident by the range of subject matter found in the oriental collections. Those responsible for bringing this great collection together realised that the history of medicine could not be studied in isolation from other disciplines as the subject impinges upon all areas of culture and civilization. Although much of the collecting was carried out through agents in various oriental countries, especially those where Wellcome had business interests, and in the auction rooms of the U.K. and the Continent, a very significant part of the oriental collection was brought together by Dr. Paira Mall who was in Wellcome's employment from 1910

² See C. Steele, *Major libraries of the world: a selective guide*, London, 1976, pp. 179 ff.

³ R.M. Price, *An annotated Catalogue of Americana in the Library of the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine*, London, 1983.

to 1926.⁴ Although only 33 years of age when he first joined Wellcome, he had already achieved a distinguished career. He was of Hindu extraction, trained in medicine at Munich and became chief medical adviser to the Maharajah of Kapurthala. He then served as an army surgeon in the first Japanese army during the Russo-Japanese war (1904/5). He eventually came to Britain becoming a licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians.⁵ As a result of his varied career in many countries he both spoke and wrote several oriental and western languages which was of much assistance to Wellcome when developing his oriental collections. Dr. Mall spent ten of his sixteen years with Wellcome in the subcontinent itself collecting for both the Museum and the Library. As a result, the Wellcome Institute possesses one of the finest collections of Sanskrit manuscripts in Britain and the largest collection of Hindi manuscripts in Europe. Besides the range of subject, the range in time is immense, the earliest manuscript dating from sixth century B.C. Demotic and Hieratic papyri to the modern printed book 2½ thousand years later in our own time. The diversity of the oriental collections is also reflected in the variety of materials used. Besides papyri from ancient Egypt, the Library holds manuscripts written on metal, ivory and bone from Burma, Indo-China and Indonesia; Hebrew scrolls written on leather, over a thousand manuscripts written on palm leaves as well as the more familiar codex form of manuscript written on paper.

Turning now to the oriental collections themselves, the largest among the Semitic language material is the Arabic collection of over 700 manuscripts and about 200 printed books. Descriptions of 245 works have been published.⁶ Four of these manuscripts were exhibited in the recent Islamic exhibition which took place last summer in the Muzium Negara. Other Semitic language material includes 94 Hebrew manuscripts. These comprise a number of interesting medical works dating from the 16th and 17th centuries, two Yiddish manuscripts, one Samaritan fragment of the Book of Genesis and 58 pieces of Torah scrolls of

varying age.⁷ The collection of Hebraica also consists of 115 printed books dating from the 1491 edition of 'the Canon of Avicenna', published in Naples but incomplete — the first printing in any language of this celebrated work. The collection of Semitic language material also includes a few Syriac manuscript fragments and printed books, three Karshuni manuscripts and 24 Ethiopian manuscripts, seventeen of which have been described and published.⁸

Three other languages in the collection might be briefly mentioned here. First, sixteen manuscripts and five printed books in Armenian, a description of which will eventually appear in a union catalogue of Armenian manuscripts in the United Kingdom when published. The Library also holds three Coptic manuscripts and a Georgian manuscript.

Before moving on to discuss material relating to South Asia, reference may be made here to the Persian and Turkish collections. The Library contains an important collection of 650 Persian manuscripts, three of which were on display in the International Exhibition on Islamic Civilization. In addition the Wellcome Institute possesses over a hundred Persian printed books some of which are fine examples of early printing in India of Persian language material. The entire Persian collection, both manuscripts and printed books, is being catalogued as a Ph.D. thesis in librarianship at the Department of Library Information and Archive Studies at University College, London. One of the Library's great treasures is the horoscope of Prince Iskandar, which contains a double page representation of the heavens at the time of Prince Iskandar's birth with decorative drawings of the planets and signs of the zodiac. The horoscope was copied and illuminated in 813 A.H./1410 A.D. at Shiraz where Iskandar established the celebrated school of miniature painting which later moved to Heirat. The prince, a grandson of Tamerlane the Great, although of distinguished ancestry and whose horoscope predicted good fortune, was killed in battle only four years after the horoscope was copied in 1414 A.D. There is a small collection of 27 Turkish

⁴ N. Allan, 'The Oriental Collections in the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1981, pp. 10–25.

⁵ H. Turner, *Henry Wellcome, the man, his collection and his legacy*, London, 1980, pp. 45–46.

⁶ See A.Z. Iskandar, *A Catalogue of Arabic Manuscripts on Medicine and Science in the Wellcome Historical Medical Library*, London, 1967.

⁷ N. Allan, 'Catalogue of Hebrew manuscripts in the Wellcome Institute, London'. *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 27, 1982, pp. 193–220.

⁸ S. Strelcyn, 'Catalogue of Ethiopian manuscripts of the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine in London', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental & African Studies*, 35, (1), 1972, pp. 27–55.

manuscripts including some exquisite calendars showing Ottoman calligraphy at its best. The Institute also holds about sixty Turkish printed books.

Largest in importance and size is our Sanskrit collection which numbers some 6,000 manuscripts and several hundred printed books and lithographs, many of which are unbound. Additionally, the collection also includes some 600 Prakrit manuscripts.⁹ Most of the major traditional medical texts are represented in the collection including the *Samhita* of Susruta, the father of surgery in India and the *Samhita* of Caraka who is regarded as the father of Indian medicine. Texts relating to Sastra, i.e. the traditional disciplines of study including grammar, law, lexicography, philosophy, along with medicine, astrology and astronomy, feature strongly as do texts concerned with Hinduism and various other sectarian religions especially Jain. Apart from the standard Devanagari script many other scripts are also represented, Bengali and Sarada being met with most frequently. A few of the manuscripts contain illustrations and miniatures which occasionally depict scenes of medical treatment. Most of the Sanskrit manuscripts are written in ink on Indian handmade paper, but the collection contains 150 palm leaf manuscripts and several written on birch bark. In a number of instances, however, manuscripts are incomplete or fragmentary. Over the last thirty years work has been sporadically carried out on the collection.¹⁰ Pali is also well represented with around 150 manuscripts. Some hundred of these are in Burmese script while the remainder are mostly in Sinhalese or Khmer scripts. Over eighty are written on palm leaves while 21 are written on metal and others on paper with a few on ivory. Many of these manuscripts are exceedingly fine, richly gilded with lacquered script and contained between beautifully painted boards.

A further nine languages of the subcontinent are represented. The collection of Hindi manuscripts numbering over four hundred is one of the strongest in Europe with medicine, veterinary medicine and astronomy predominating. In addition, the Library

holds 150 Hindi printed books. Other North Indian language material includes small collections of Marathi, Oriya, Panjabi and Urdu manuscripts and printed books. Dravidian language material is also well represented especially Tamil with small collections of Kanarese, Malayalam and Telugu material. Last, but certainly not least, the Library contains, an important collection of Sinhalese palm leaf manuscripts in number over four hundred.

In recent years interest has been taken in the South East Asian Collections by a number of scholars and as a result catalogues of these collections have now been published.¹¹ The Library contains 23 Batak manuscripts, nine written on bone, one on paper, two on bamboo and the remainder on tree bark. Dr. Voorhoeve, formerly of Leiden University Library, described six of the tree bark manuscripts which appeared in his catalogue published in 1977.¹² The remainder are described in a supplement together with Professor Ricklefs's description of eleven Javanese palm leaf manuscripts and Dr. Milner's catalogue of the Malay collection.¹³ The Batak manuscripts are in Dairi, Karo and Toba Batak and generally date from the 19th century: the subject matter relates to ethno-medicine.

The Malay Collection comprises over forty manuscripts divided into nine sections containing information collected by Dudley Francis Amelius Hervey, (1849-1911), son of the Revd. Lord Charles Amelius Hervey, rector of Chesterford and grandson of the first Marquis of Bristol. Hervey, a British civil servant in the Straits Settlements, as it was then known, was the first cadet appointed to the new civil service inaugurated to administer the Straits Settlements when they were separated from India and made a British Crown Colony in 1867.

His articles and monographs deal with literature, history, law, customs, botany, zoology and magic and his knowledge of Malacca, the Negri Sembilan and Johor were considerable. A large collection of Hervey's unpublished papers were donated to the Malayan Information Agency in London in 1938 and the

⁹ See D. Wujastyk, *The South Asian Collections of the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine*, London, 1984. Also D. Wujastyk, "The South Asian Holdings of the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine", *South Asia Library Notes and Queries*, 16, 1984, pp. 3-5.

¹⁰ M. Winder, "Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, London", *International Association of the Vrindaban Institute, Bulletin III*, 1976, pp. 19-21.

¹¹ See N. Allan, "The Wellcome Institute and its Library with special reference to South East Asia", *South East Asia Library Group Newsletter*, 22, 1980, pp. 1-4.

¹² M.C. Ricklefs & P. Voorhoeve, *Indonesian Manuscripts in Great Britain: a catalogue of Indonesian Languages in British Public Collections*, Oxford, 1977, p. 25.

¹³ M.C. Ricklefs & P. Voorhoeve, 'Indonesian manuscripts in Great Britain: Addenda et Corrigenda', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental & African Studies*, 45 (2), 1982, pp. 300 - 322.

collection has been in the Arkib Negara Malaysia since 1969. The School of Oriental & African Studies, London University and the University of Cambridge besides the Wellcome Institute also hold a number of Malay manuscripts collected by Hervey.

The Wellcome collection of Malay manuscripts demonstrates both the range of Hervey's interests and his technique as a researcher. Like many other civil servants he relied heavily on his Malay writer, Munshi Muhammad Jaafar but unlike other scholar officials of his time, Hervey acknowledged his indebtedness to his Munshi, although he was not Hervey's only informant.¹⁴ The 'Munshi' sought information and explanations from a wide spectrum of local people and on one occasion Hervey asked the Resident Superintendent of Forests "to use the four best men you can find in the settlement" to collect lists of grasses in Malacca. A number of the papers, which include a legal text, notes on rice varieties and prices are contained in official folders and the minutes written on these folders are sometimes of particular interest. The largest single category of material in the Hervey collection relates to Malay terms and uses for plants and animals.¹⁵ In addition to the Hervey collection of Malay manuscripts the Library holds a further Malay manuscript in Middle Malay written on eight strips of bamboo in the rencong script of South Sumatra. The text is an invocation of saints and angels whose places of residence and names are mentioned asking for protection against enemies.

The Thai collection numbers 21 manuscripts comprising folding books and palm leaf manuscripts. The largest of the South East Asian Collections however is Burmese. The Library holds over a hundred manuscripts, the majority of which are written on palm leaves, with some on metal while others contain illustrations in paper folding books. A number of the Burmese palm leaf manuscripts have beautifully gilded edges and many deal with scientific subjects. Other South East Asian material includes small collections of Tam and Shan manuscripts.

Of the Far Eastern collections, the Chinese material is the most strongly represented with some six hundred

block printed books, a dozen manuscripts and a few examples of calligraphy. Nearly three hundred of these block printed books deal specifically with medicine including acupuncture and moxibustion. Other areas of medicine that feature strongly are pharmacopoeia, midwifery, ophthalmology and material relating to herbs. The collection as a whole is rich in medical illustration, especially anatomical, showing the meridians for acupuncture and the moxa points on the body where cauterisation is applied. The Japanese collection is small comprising of 140 block printed books and eleven manuscripts. The subjects covered are wide-ranging but medicine and related topics predominate. Other Far Eastern material includes 140 Tibetan manuscripts and xylographs. The important medical works *Rgyud bze* and *Llan thabs* can be found in this collection and an interesting Sanskrit-Tibetan dictionary written by L.A. Waddell of the Younghusband expedition to Tibet in 1904. Before passing from the Far Eastern Oriental Collections, mention might be made to an interesting Kalmuck printed book which is a translation of a once popular Russian handbook of elementary medical practice compiled at the beginning of the last century and printed in Kalmuck script.¹⁶ The Library also contains a rare Manchu translation of part of the Kanjur, three Manchu diplomas¹⁷, a single Mongolian manuscript and a Lolo manuscript.

Access to the oriental manuscript collections is limited to collections for which there are catalogues available. At present we have catalogues to the Arabic, Batak, Ethiopian, Hebrew, Javanese, Malay and Manchu collections and catalogues of Armenian, Georgian and Persian manuscripts should soon be available while supplementary catalogues of Arabic and Ethiopian manuscripts will eventually appear. Work on Demotic and Hieratic papyri, Hindi, Kanarese, Sanskrit, Sinhalese, Syriac, Tamil, Thai, Tibetan, and Turkish is in hand. All catalogued books printed in oriental scripts appear in the main library card catalogue and those printed before 1850 in the published catalogue of printed books — the fourth volume of which is now in preparation and will contain the

¹⁴ See C.O. Blagden, "Obituary Notice: Dudley Francis Amelius Hervey, C.M.G. M.R.A.S.", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1911, pp. 909–911.

¹⁵ R.F. Eljen, M.B. Hooker & A.C. Milner, "The Hervey Malay Collection in the Wellcome Institute", *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 54(1), 1981, pp. 82–91.

¹⁶ See N. Allan, "Some early medical contacts with the Kalmuck Tribes of Siberia", *Medical History*, 27, 1983, pp. 305–309.

¹⁷ See G.R. Bawden, 'A volume of the Kanjur in Manchu translation in the library of the Wellcome Institute', *Zentralasiatische Studien*, 14 (2), 1981, pp. 65 – 84.

letters M to R.¹⁸ Catalogues of western manuscripts which include material relevant to the east have been published in two volumes.¹⁹

The Institute publishes two periodicals, *Medical History* and *Current Work in the History of Medicine*. *Medical History* is the leading British journal devoted to the history of medicine and related sciences. It publishes articles and book reviews from scholars throughout the world. There is, in addition, an annual hardback supplement to *Medical History*, available separately. These supplements consist of monographs or collections of papers on aspects of the history of medicine. *Current Work in the History of Medicine* is a bibliographical tool produced by the Library staff. Each quarterly issue lists some 1400 books and articles on the history of medicine in all major European and Oriental languages. The entire bibliography from its beginning in 1954 up to 1978 was cumulated in 18 volumes and published by Kraus International Publications, Munich, in 1980.²⁰

Although the Wellcome Institute is concerned with history, it lives in the present and is therefore aware of

ever-changing new technologies of the computer age. The Library has now embarked on a five-year program to produce a machine-readable bibliographical record of all printed materials published after 1850 in its collections. The services of an American library cooperative called OCLC (Online Computer Library Center) based in Dublin, Ohio, is being used. The heart of OCLC is a union catalogue of over 10,000,000 MARC (Machine Readable Catalogue) records and the cataloguing staff will be connected to the union catalogue by computer terminals.

Like most great libraries the Library of the Wellcome Institute began as the private collection of one man. Although Wellcome may not have visualised the application of the computer of our own time to mechanise his collection, his vision for the future of his collection has been realised for his Library is the centre of a unique and international institution devoted to the history of medicine and allied disciplines which brings scholars together year by year from all parts of the world.

¹⁸ See also, *A catalogue of printed books in the Wellcome Historical Medical Library*. Vol. 1. (edited by F.N.L. Poynter). *Books printed before 1641*, London, 1962. Vol II. (compiled by H.R. Denham). *Books printed from 1641 to 1850. A-E.*, London, 1966. Vol III. (compiled by H.R. Denham), *Book printed from 1641 to 1850, F-L*. London, 1976.

¹⁹ S.A.J. Moorat, *Catalogue of western manuscripts on medicine and science in the Wellcome Historical Medical Library*. I. *MSS written before 1650 A.D.*, London, 1962; II, *written after 1650 A.D., A-M, N-Z*, London, 1973. Western manuscripts relating to Asia and North Africa are also listed in M.D. Wainwright & N. Matthews, *A guide to western manuscripts and documents in the British Isles relating to South & South East Asia*, London, 1965, 253-7; N. Matthews & M.D. Wainwright, *A guide to manuscripts and documents in the British Isles relating to the Far East*, Oxford, 1977, 93-96; N. Matthews & M.D. Wainwright, *A guide to manuscripts and documents in the British Isles relating to the Middle East & North Africa*, Oxford, 1980, 214 - 220.

²⁰ Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine and Related Sciences, London, *Subject Catalogue of the History of Medicine and Related Sciences*, Munich, 1980.



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 فدصره. سفر دان ربيوالاول كفلاج
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كس

Legal text describing the (matrilineal) Minangkabau System originally from Sumatra in Jawi script. (Well. Mal. 1B f. 13.)

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<u>name of snake</u>	<u>Dr. Davison's remarks</u>	<u>Malay ideas</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
Heraung	poisonous		I have not met
Sisa mata hari	do		Malayo who
Rengkok			know any of
Kelapah piang			these six
Chindar wach			species of
Linta mani			snakes here.

Species (various) of ulas sawa - all harmless are

sawa chindar

" Kumpang

" Lekok

" Kumpang

" Manjani

" Liar

" Rendam

" Rimba

also but I have not met Malayo who knows them

sawa Kumpang - Kumpang & Siol.

W.A.
5.4.90.

Note.

Where the Malay idea agrees with Dr. Davison I have made no remark as to whether a snake is poisonous or harmless. In other cases where there is no remark in the column "Malay ideas" it may be taken that the snake is harmless. If any descriptive information is wanted I shall be glad to supply it.

5.4.90.

List of snake names in Malay explaining whether poisonous or not according to Malay and European ideas. Romanized script. (Well. Mal. & B. f. 6)

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